MUSICAL FARCES

HOW THEY ARE MADE

.....BY FRANKLIN FYLES.....

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HOW are the musical farces made? How do the makers mix the jokes and capers, the songs and dances, which are contributed by sometimes as many as half a dozen persons for a single play? Well, often the stage director is the blender of the various materials. But in the cases of "Glittering Gloria" and "The Good Old Summer Time" there were two writers only for each—one for the language and one for the music. The processes were differently peculiar, too. "Glittering Gloria" was at first a plain farce and in that form it was presented in London. The author was C. M. S. McClellan, pen-named Hugh Morton, formerly editor and most prolific cynic of Town Topics, the scandalizing journal which makes our "smart set" possible. He thought that his play would do well in America with its glittering chorus girl, Gloria, singing and dancing with the gay gang from the theatre. So he put in the requisite verses and Bernard Roth fitted tunes to them. This has resulted in an oddity, as the piece is still a farce in spirit and manner, with song and dance manifestly interpolated, but without the characteristics of extravaganza.

The starting point of "The Good Old Summer Time" was the song which by itself got into hum and whistle two seasons ago, was waltzed to everywhere and is hardly yet eliminated from the repertory of the hand organs. It was written by George Evans, a vaudeville chap known to the public as the Honey Boy, from a sketch with which he had been identified, and to his section of stageland as a chum of Blanche Ring, then in a traveling variety company. It is pertinent to be personal here in order to be historical. Blanche got into Broadway with an extravaganza, "The Defender," and George gave his song to her. It served to hoist her to a higher grade of favor as just about the breeziest of the balladists. She went thence to Mrs. Osborne's play house, that ephemeral freak theatre of rounders and bounders. Well, she soon lost, or left, her Honey Boy, who may be miserable over the separation and may be he is happy.

That doesn't matter to this narrative of how he has utilized the song by taking its title for a musical farce. Still more adroit is the thorough and complete use he makes of himself. First, he works in his ugly little person as a horse jockey, though not very amusingly, and a few minutes of it is enough. Second, he suddenly thrusts his hands into a dish of burnt cork, smears his face in sight of the audience and for the ensuing hour is the same comic negro that he has been in vaudeville. Third, he comes out with the black washed off and is the accustomed monologue humorist. New tunes of his own and some writing by Ben Shields freshen his old kind of effects.

The structure of "Glittering Gloria" is trebly international. The basis may have been—I don't say it was—a French farce on the theme which shocked us properly and profoundly when Dion Boucicault introduced it here in "Forbidden Fruit" at the awesomely venerated Wallack's theatre of palmy legitimacy, but to which it is now a habit of the carpers to berate it as peculiar to the present degeneracy of the stage. Lester Wallack himself and Harey Montague acted in that blushworthy play. But the luscious fruit which Morton's epicures in vice hanker for is dated up to today. Gloria is one of those chorus girls who get $15 a week on the stage and lets you guess how much elsewhere. The author shows that he is proud of her by providing songs in which she brags of her depravity. And Adele Ritchie doesn't blush to impersonate her. The actress, fair and fragile to look at as a Dresden china figure of a shepherdess, has been shrewdly chosen to etherialize what might seem like an imp of mischief moulded in brass. Adele is called on to utter no indelicate word, save when she sings of her remunerated witcheries in London and of her hope that they will cash up as richly in New York. Entirely British must have been an atmosphere of the farce as played at the lately knighted Wyndham's theatre, even though four of its men competed to buy a diamond necklace as a reward of demerit for Gloria. Two are London types of young men, with a bride and a fiancee to be excited by the infidelities. A third is a fluffy old rural solicitor and a fourth is a blatant and bellicose ranchman from Texas.

The musical addenda is the distinctly American element. The Hengler sisters, with pretty faces and expressionless as dolls and joints as flexible as jumping jacks, are here a valet in trousers and a maidservant in skirts. They are voiceless, but as nimble as their father, Tom Hengler, used to be, and their dance is like a dainty reminder of the minstrel jigging of other days. The best of the feminine songs, which is the wickedest also, is allotted to Miss Ritchie, and is called "The Hothouse of Broadway." She wonders if she will be placed therein, to be cut and wired for the big tenderloin bouquet. The ditty which will be most widely heard outside the theatre is "Cordelia," an easy Irish melody, much like the worn-out "Bedelia." Eugene O'Rourke sings it with all the brogue that his strong lungs can send out and the gallery whistles its chorus with him.

These two plays serve to illustrate the different standpoints from which many of us, including some of our newspaper reviewers, view entertainments on and off Broadway. Every merit in "Glittering Gloria" is minimized and every defect magnified. It is the reverse with "The Good Old Summer Time," because it is half a mile distant from the stage center of the town. George Evans is the only competent comedian in it, and there is no actress of any account; but the one man is so industriously funny and the numerous girls are so lively, pretty and jauntily clad, that we are ready to be delighted. We don't disdain even the ever-same Irishman, German, Bowery bruiser and chump detective officer, though all are done by wooden actors, and we are rapturous over the truly good display of show girls in their various guises of fashionably gowned belles, slouchy slum maidens, Japs in kimonas and jockeys in saddle breeches. The new tune which I pick out for popularity is not "In the Sweet Spring Time," an attempt by Evans to duplicate the one after which he names his play; nor is it "My Little Japanese," in which an Oriental theme is scored excellently and made a graceful pantomime; but it is "Keep Away From Rosie," for its air is a simple, swinging melody and its refrain of warning to all admirers of Rosie to keep out of dangerous rivalry is racy with ragtime negroism.

It doesn't seem to me that five minutes in any play were ever more violent with noise and commotion than five that are in "The Pit." And I take into account not only all the mobs and battles in melodramas, but also all the thunder storms, volcanic eruptions, earthquake upheavals and other convulsions of nature in spectacles. The scene is in the grain pit of the Chicago board of trade at the climax of an attempt to corner the wheat market, with buyers and sellers for the speculators in a tumult which sounds like an outbreak of lunatics in an asylum and looks like an encounter of athletes on a football field. It has been preceded by sounds of the impending struggle as heard in a broker's office nearby, and it ends with the dash of the boss bull into the mass of men, his cries of wild despair and his assaults of maniac frenzy silencing and quieting the rest of them. He is the Curtis Jadwin of Frank Norris' novel, of course, and the impersonator is Wilton Lackaye, strong lunged and stalwart. Yet when Lackaye came before the curtain on the opening night, he was so scant of breath and disheveled in dress that, if we hadn't seen him in the mimic melee we might have mistaken him for a crazed fellow who had come out to warn us of a fire disaster.

Mr. Lackaye told us that the play, like the book, is meant to assert and illustrate the evil of estrangement that commonly arises between husbands engrossed in business affairs and wives who take no heed of them. The author made Jadwin neglect his home to operate on 'change, and his lonely wife goes to the verge of elopement with a lover in sympathy with her aesthetic nature. The acting version of the story makes the bane of commercial gambling the more appreciable theme, partly because the representation of the panic in the brain pit is so strong as to overpower all else that is done, but more than that because Channing Pollock, who wrote it, has been crude and clumsy in his effort to carry over the stage the wife's side of the case. William A. Brady's vim vitalizes the episode of the wheat cornerer's downfall. Brady directed the production, which he planned, too, and paid for with a firm and free hand; and he led the turbulence in the first performance here. Lackaye is finely artistic, even during the physical fury, for then his facial expressions are eloquent while his words are lost in the uproar. So the conditions favor Mr. Jadwin against Mrs. Jadwin in fixing and holding the attention of the audience.

Nevertheless, the third act of "The Pit" is given up to the wife in that room of books, pictures, statuary and music which the novel describes as the magnificent temple of Mrs. Jadwin's aestheticism, from which Jadwin stays away, leaving her lonely and resentful, and the very compatible Corthell plays the organ, lulls her conscience and almost leads her astray. It is here that the playwright roughens rather than smoothes the ruggedly valuable material of the book and so loses much of its value. The first act consists of the sentimental encounter of Jadwin and Laura Dearborn in the lobby of the Chicago Auditorium on an opera night, with a display of the fashionable people of the city. The act gives the amateur theatrical rehearsal on the Cressler' lawn and brings the two to a betrothal. But the introduction of the theme which popularized Norris' novel is delayed till the play is half over.

Probably you have not read Bernard Shaw's play, "The Man of Destiny." Less than 3,000 of the books containing it have been sold in all America. Anyway, you have not seen it acted. It consists of an hour of dialogue between Napoleon Bonaparte and a girl named merely as "a lady," broken briefly by the talk of two minor persons. He is 26 years old and campaigning in Italy. She has intercepted a letter from France telling that his wife is disloyal in his absence. Nearly all the hour is spent in a verbal fight for possession of that consequential letter, he alternately bullying and cajoling her, she defying and bedevilling him, till they decide to burn it and destroy the scandal. The salient thing in Shaw's piece as a delineation of Bonaparte before he had more than headed himself for the throne of France. The wit of the writing is keen and it carries some satire of England, but the novelty lies in the unfamiliar Bonaparte. French histories and novels give many accounts of his exploits in love and war while he was a fighting general abroad, and before he became a dictator at home. From some of those sources a melodrama was put together for Edward H. Sothern, who made himself look like the authentic portraits made at that period. Francis Wilson imitated the same original in a Napoleonic comic opera with some serious tendencies, though he located the scenes in Egypt. Arnold Daly, who assumes the character in the Shaw piece, copies the picture still more closely than Sothern or Wilson did, as his face permits an almost exact resemblance.

This Bonaparte doesn't clasp his hands behind him nor thrust one of them into the breast of his coat. He doesn't use his legs in strides or straddles. His long hair hasn't been cropped and a lock of it isn't drawn down the middle of his forehead. He is rude in manner, careless in toilet and in no way recognizable as a chap who would develop into Napoleon the First. Shaw makes him and "the lady" admire each other before their conference is over. In the course of it the proverb about Caesar's wife being above suspicion is applied to Josephine and the scandal of her affair with Barras. At the tag the "lady," who has shown herself to be a venturesome creature, says to the general, whose earlier exploits of love in war were very vicious: "I wonder would Caesar's wife," meaning Mrs. Bonaparte, "be above suspicion if she saw us here together." As they are snugly close together, and the desirous man replies to the inviting girl, "I wonder," the audience is prone to think the worst of them.

Arnold Daly, who came suddenly within the area of stage art and literature by producing Shaw's "Candida," and now fixes himself firmly there by a bold and fine performance in "The Man of Destiny," was an office boy in the Frohman establishment only a few years ago. Nature had qualified him to be a mimic. Frohman let him try a small role and he rapidly became a clever actor of eccentric characters. But no one accredited him with the ability, or even the ambition, to capture the Shaw cult. It was told of him that, getting into a discussion of the proper reading of Antony's oration over Caesar's body, he took down the book of "Antony and Cleopatra" to find the passage in question. But plainly that was libelous. No one speaks of him in that way now, nor does his acting betray any lack of education, though most of its excellence does manifestly come of an intuitive dramatic sense rather than slavish study. He is a genius.

MOTHERLY LANDLADY.

Why Kistrick Has Given Notice of Intention to Give Up His Room.

(Chicago News.)

When Kistrick first came to the city he had the good fortune to fall in with a motherly landlady, who took an interest in him from the first. She mentioned the fact that she had a married son of her own, who lived in Seattle, and she declared that Kistrick was the living, breathing image of what her son was at his age. Mrs. Piedermel, which was the mortherly landlady's name, once showed Kistrick a tintype picture of the son. Kistrick said to himself: "Well, if I look like that—!"

However Mrs. Piedermel was so anxious to give her boarder exactly what he liked to eat, so careful about his bed linen and other little matters tending to his personal comfort that Kistrick was satisfied.

After Kistrick made a few acquaintances he began to go out a little in the evenings, and this gave Mrs. Piedermel much concern. She began to see dark circles under his eyes and to notice that he was growing thinner. It was her opinion that he was not getting enough sleep.

One evening after supper Kistrick came down stairs very much dressed up and tried to sneak out of the house, but his motherly landlady was on the watch and caught him.

"Now you are not going out again tonight, Mr. Kistrick, are you?" she said, coaxingly.

"Why, yes," said Kistrick, half-apologetically. "But then I'll be back a little after 10 o'clock."

"I wish you'd go to bed and get a good night's rest."

"I've got to go out," said Kistrick.

"Then just wait a minute," said the landlady. "I'd like you to take something for me before you go."

Kistrick sighed as she bustled off. He thought perhaps it was some letters that she wanted mailed, but it seemed that it was coffee. "It's a cold night," said Mrs. Piedermel, "and it will do you good to drink it right down." And Kistrick, thankful to get off so easily, drank it down.

He was not long in arriving at his destination and the prospect seemed good for a prolonged tete-a-tete. The girl was particularly radiant and gracious. For the first half-hour Kistrick thought he was in paradise. Then he began to stifle yawns. It was simply horrible, but he couldn't help it: an undeniable drowsiness seemed to be stealing over him. In a strangely distressed manner once or twice he made one or two only partially successful efforts to arouse himself and be entertaining, but he soon relapsed. After a little he felt himself shaken by the shoulder pretty energetically and a gruff masculine voice suggested the advisability of his going home and getting to bed. He realized dimly that this was the girl's father and he struggled to his feet and with some assistance left the house.

The fresh air revived him sufficiently to enable him to get home, but he was no sooner in his room than he rolled over on the bed and slumbered like a log until wakened by Mrs. Piedermel pounding on his door and telling him that breakfast was ready.

When Kistrick reached home that evening he found a letter awaiting him. It was addressed in a feminine hand, and its contents filled him with despair. At dinner he had no appetite, but when his coffee came to him he drank it thoughtfully, and, after two or three sips, turned suddenly on Mrs. Piedermel.

"Do you think that there could possibly have been anything in that coffee you gave me last night?" he asked—"in the cup, for instance? Something affected me most strangely and I can't think what it could have been unless——"

Mrs. Piedermel smiled complacently. "Did you sleep well?" she asked.

"Sleep!" began Kistrick.

"I didn't mean to tell you," said the motherly landlady, "but I thought I'd play a little joke on you and see if I couldn't make you appreciate your bed. My married niece, when she was here with her baby, left a bottle of soothing syrup—which I don't hold with—and I thought it wouldn't do you much harm if I gave you a little dose in your coffee."

Kistrick made his landlady call on the girl in question and explain fully. He has recently given notice of his intention to give up his room—as a result of the explanation. Not that he is dissatisfied, he has assured Mrs. Piedermel, but now he is going to keep house.

The Climax.

(Judge.)

A haughty smile curled the patrician lips of the fair Hilga as she stood at the head of the grand staircase, gazing scornfully down to the tesselated floor of the grand hallway. Carelessly she rested her firm, white hand upon the pedestal of a marvelously carved statuette in Carrara marble, while her eyes took on a stern gaze as she peeped into the dimly lighted sweep of the richly decorated vestibule. With a half sigh she swept down the stairway and on through the hall, only to be stopped by Mme. Conestogah.

"Hilga," said Mme. Conestogah, "you would better sweep down the stairs again. You skipped two or three steps at the landing. And when you you finish that go out and sweep off the porch."

"Ay wal," said Hilga, griping the broom tightly and thinking of giving notice that afternoon.

Nothing Stronger.

(Chicago Tribune.)

"Your trouble," announced the physician, after a thorough examination, "is an affection of the heart."

"If anything of that kind is the matter with me, doctor," said the patient, a confirmed old bachelor, "it's purely platonic."